

Christine Joyce

9/27/04

From: Elisa Wright [elisa@arc-of-innovation.org]

Sent: Wednesday, September 22, 2004 2:12 PM

To: Board of Selectmen

Subject: Arc Advocacy: Partnership supports restoration of LIFT service & improved access to RTA services



495/METROWEST CORRIDOR PARTNERSHIP

200 FRIBERG PARKWAY, WESTBOROUGH, MA 01581
PHONE: (774) 760-0495 FAX: (774) 760-0017

ARC ADVOCACY

September 22, 2004

*Advocacy from the 495/MetroWest Corridor Partnership, a non-profit organization
serving thirty-two communities through public/private collaborations.*

***Partnership Supports Restoration of LIFT service
and Improved Access to RTA services***

When Governor Romney signed the recent state supplemental budget into law on Friday, September 17th, this measure included \$475,000 in funding for the restoration of LIFT 5 and 6 service in the 495/MetroWest region. As many of you are aware, this was a hard fought victory, and due to the overwhelming outcry throughout the region - from the legislative delegation, municipal officials, business leaders, social service agencies, and media outlets.

At the direction of the Board of Directors, the 495/MetroWest Corridor Partnership was part of these advocacy efforts, and in fact, was able to advocate for the restoration of LIFT service and improved access to RTA services directly to Governor Romney last week. This opportunity arose in a private meeting between the Governor, senior staff for the Executive Office of Economic Development, and the Boards of Directors for the 495/MetroWest Affiliated Chambers - the Corridor Nine, Marlborough Regional, MetroWest, and United Chambers of Commerce.

During the meeting, Partnership staff cited the 'Top Ten Transportation Nightmares' project's determination that improved access to public transportation is the 495/MetroWest region's #1 transportation need, and asked for the Governor's support for operational funds to restore LIFT 5 & 6, as well as his support for improving access to Regional Transit Authority (RTA) programs in the region. Partnership staff subsequently sent detailed correspondence to the Governor (attached) and appropriate administration officials asking for their support of these initiatives.

All involved deserve much credit and appreciation for restoring LIFT service funding - but clearly we need to continue our advocacy efforts on behalf of improving regional access to RTA programs. Accordingly, Partnership staff will be continuing their efforts on this issue, particularly with language in the Transportation Bond statute that calls for the Secretary of Transportation to study the need and feasibility of allowing a

9/23/2004

municipality to join an existing RTA or form a new RTA, as well as make revenue proposals for financing such services. As requested by the Board of Directors, sample correspondence is also attached to this email for use in advocating to Governor Romney on this issue.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding the Partnership's advocacy efforts on these issues, or the correspondence attached to this email, then please feel free to contact our offices by phone at (774) 760-0495 or by email to paul@arc-of-innovation.org.

Thank you very much for your time and support of the 495/MetroWest Corridor Partnership!

September 17, 2004

Governor W. Mitt Romney
State House
Boston, MA 02133

DELIVERED BY FACSIMILE TO (617) 727-9725

Dear Governor Romney:

Thank you very much for taking the time from your busy schedule on Tuesday to meet with the Boards of Directors for the 495/MetroWest Affiliated Chambers - the Corridor Nine, Marlborough Regional, MetroWest, and United Chambers of Commerce. We greatly appreciated the opportunity to hear your perspective on the state's economic growth and regional issues.

As mentioned in our discussion, we represent the 495/MetroWest Corridor Partnership, a non-profit advocacy organization serving thirty-two towns, half a million residents, and an employment base of \$13.5 Billion - second only to Boston's - by addressing regional needs through public / private collaboration, and by enhancing the economic vitality and quality of life while sustaining natural resources. Accordingly, the Partnership is very concerned about regional constraints and limitations, and has been conducting numerous initiatives on housing, transportation, brownfields, workforce, and water supply issues.

Through one of these initiatives, the 'Top Ten Transportation Nightmares' Project, the Partnership solicited public nominations through the MetroWest Daily News and Community Newspapers on the region's top transportation needs. After conducting a detailed analysis of these public nominations, a consistent theme emerged - the region lacked adequate public transportation services. This public outcry is reinforced by recent data released by the U.S. Census, showing that 57% of area residents are commuting to employment centers within the 495/MetroWest region. Accordingly, the Partnership has determined that the region's #1 transportation need is for improved access to transportation services.

As we discussed on Tuesday, there are two specific ongoing initiatives where we would request your Administration's assistance in addressing this need for improved public transportation services in the 495/MetroWest region. One is a short term method of addressing this situation, by restoring LIFT bus service through approving operating funds contained in the supplemental budget awaiting your signature. The longer term method of addressing this situation is to support reforms to state statute to allow communities to join a Regional Transit Authority, and to support the development of new regional transit authority operations.

The LIFT bus service, or Local Inter-Framingham Transportation, has been the only public transportation program serving the Route 9 corridor in the 495/MetroWest region. Unfortunately, two of the service's five routes were discontinued this past June, because the MBTA chose not to renew their operational funding. As the only provider of public transportation services within 495/MetroWest, this decision was a severe blow to the region, which was already facing a scarcity of public transportation programs.

The cancelled routes - LIFT 5 and LIFT 6 - served to connect Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Ashland, and Milford. During only the first four months of this year, riders, including seniors, the disabled, low income, and teens, took nearly 5,000 trips on these routes. Regardless of regional need, the MBTA justified their decision to cut operational funds for LIFT by pointing out that Milford was

beyond their service area and citing a decline in ridership for these routes. These justifications, however, ignore the facts that the ridership decline only occurred after a prior funding cut forced corresponding cuts in service on these routes, and ironically enough, this LIFT service allowed Milford residents to access MBTA commuter rail service in Framingham.

The region's leaders, including the media, political, business, social service, environmental, and planning communities, have reacted to LIFT's funding cuts by calling for restoration of funds and services. Funding these routes only makes sense, from an economic, environmental, and social standpoint, so we urge you to approve the \$475,000 in funding for the LIFT service contained in Line Item 6005-0020 in the supplemental budget awaiting your signature.

We would also ask for your support in expanding access to regional transit authority (or RTA) services. Currently, the two dominant regional transit authorities serving our region - the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Worcester Regional Transit Authority - have radial transit routes that solely service travel to and from Boston and Worcester. As a result of regional demand, the state conducted an initial feasibility study in 2001 for a MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority. Due to this study's positive findings, the state also initiated a thorough analysis of the potential market for transit services, as well as potential transit programs. This report conclusively demonstrated the need for mass transportation programs in the 495/MetroWest region, as well as identifying regional options for meeting those needs.

While most of these options involved improved access to mass transportation services, currently there are statutory obstacles to municipalities taking such action. Under current interpretation of Massachusetts law, municipalities served by the MBTA cannot join another RTA in order to obtain additional transit services. This interpretation stands, despite the obvious inequities with those other communities served by the MBTA that already belong to another RTA. As a result, in the interests of equity, consistency with Smart Growth principles, and meeting the transit needs of the suburban regions, state statute should be amended in C. 161A and C. 161B to allow suburban MBTA communities to join RTA's in order to meet the overwhelming and ever-growing demand for additional mass transportation services.

In order to address these obstacles and allow suburban communities to access RTA services, Section 79 of the Transportation Bond statute, calls for the Secretary of Transportation to study the need and feasibility of allowing a municipality to join an existing regional transit authority or form a new regional transit authority, as well as make revenue proposals for financing such services. It is absolutely imperative that the Secretary's recommendations address these statutory conflicts and funding obstacles to allow suburban communities to access regional transit programs. To that end, we ask you to support the enactment of the necessary statutory and funding changes.

Again, thank you very much for your time and consideration of these requests. Please feel free to call upon us any time we can be of assistance to you and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely yours,

Lynn D. Sand, CEcD
Chief Executive Officer

Paul F. Matthews
Public Affairs Program Manager

cc: Secretary of Commonwealth Development Douglas Foy.
Secretary of Economic Development Ranch Kimball.
Secretary of Transportation Daniel Grabauskas.
Secretary of Administration and Finance Eric Kriss.
MBTA General Manager Michael Mulhern.